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The Convention.

The Convention seems to occupy the mind of many of the Brethren, judging from the amount of manuscript received at this office on that subject. The views are about equally divided between having a convention and delaying it a year or two.

As the situation now is, only a small amount of good could result from a general convention of the brotherhood. It will be remembered that we are a congregational people; that our discipline, the Gospel of Christ, is established; and that no congregation shall dictate to another congregation what it shall do or shall not do.

A convention we need; a convention is demanded; but we are not ready for it now. We are in the midst of the battle, and to pause for deliberation would weaken our forces and compromise the victory. Another summer, another winter of earnest fighting will establish us upon the rock with triumph floating in the breeze; and then let us gather as warriors in a common cause and feast together upon the fruit of victory. We want that meeting at Ashland; and we want to erect an arch of triumph over Ashland College after brother Holsinger shall have finished his share of the battle and returned home.

Brethren, we are near together: as though we were sitting side by side. Brother Beer, of California, is talking to brother Balsbaugh, over in Pennsylvania, and we all can hear. Week by week word comes from the East and from the West; from the North and from the South: souls are being converted; churches organized; and the truths of the Gospel are being presented in their beautiful nakedness to seekers after the undefiled.

Let the convention matter rest for a while, and every energy be exerted in helping along the grand works that are now in progress. Our church paper will answer every purpose as a means of encouragement to one another, and as a medium through which to discuss plans of church work, for the present, which is all the ground of operation that the congregational system of church government will allow.

There is talk of being better organized; but this work must begin at the bottom. Men full of zeal and the Holy Spirit must lead out in the States where they live and organize the forces around them; and organize them to do the work before them: a general convention cannot do it. A commander in England would be in a very unfit position to command a force in the Rocky

Mountains, or the western slope of South America. The church work that is to do must be done by men who are on the spot; and to be subject to the direction of a central adviser, means inactivity, delay, and in many instances defeat.

After localities are once thoroughly organized, then a general organization for church work may be effected that can be of utility.

Personal Religion.

Martin Luther thanked God for the personal pronouns of the Bible, "he," "she," "thou," "it." The promises are personal. God sent his Son into the world. So every follower of Christ is sent bearing a commission to the world to preach the Gospel to every creature. It comes with the same authority and force to us that it did to the apostles. None can be so humble as to claim exemption. "He (not the church) that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death." "Ye are the light of the world." "Except ye repent ye shall likewise perish."

Religion begins with the personal and widens out into relation with the family, business, nation, and world. We are living in an age of individual opinion and action. An impersonal pulpit and an impersonal religion is a hollow, useless thing. It is a mistake by any church to allow the personalities of its members to be lost in its organization. Good organization is desirable—necessary. It is so in military life; it is equally so in the church. But every man in the corps must either carry a gun or swing a sabre. A great many people come into the church thinking it a fortress, merely, in which to be protected from the fiery darts of the enemy. The church is more than that. It is an aggressive force, marching and fighting as it advances. A church in which the personality of its members is lost in organization, breeds ignorance and superstition. It cannot be otherwise. It converts a man into a machine which is run by the priesthood, which does the thinking, praying, preaching—everything. There can be no development where there is no exercise of the faculties, and without cultivation there can be no improvement. If the clergy does all the praying there will be no "gift" developed among the members. Where a certain few bear all the expenses of the church there will be no development of liberality and benevolence among others; and so on with every Christian virtue and duty.

The pulpit is a wondrous power to-day, what is wanted is more pew preaching. The people do not transmute into actual life one-tenth of the pulpit preaching they hear. Many in fact, are surfeited, and are afflicted with a sort of dyspepsia. To cure this disease there must be a development and exercise of all the latent powers in the members of our churches. What a vast force lying idle in most churches; and that, too, at a time when evils are multiplying all around us. Is God's cause the meanest thing on the earth that it should be treated the meanest? The masses are to be reached and saved.

How can they be reached? That is the problem that is agitating the minds of Christian philanthropy. Still it is easy of solution; Reach the man and woman one by one, and you will reach the masses. The units make the totality of the masses. God does not save in masses; He saves one by one, and he employs individuals to do it. Let us hope that the day is coming when the Church militant will be endowed and equipped with an holy unction and power in order to meet the spirit of anti Christ that is organizing everywhere and that will lead us to proclaim the Gospel wherever there is a soul unsaved. Formalism is the foe of Christianity. It is eating out the vitals of practical religion. Men women and children are stumbling into ruin over the conventionalities of Christians; suffering and woe are in our midst. God only knows of the squalidness, ignorance, destitution and crime going on right under our eyes, while we are priding ourselves on the decency of our profession. Let us illustrate the active charity of the Christian religion by casting a ray of sunshine into some poor, weary heart. Let us not say that we have faith and then refuse to prove that faith by our works.

A Bureau of Correspondence.

We have decided to maintain a bureau of correspondence, for the purpose of doing what may be done toward supplying churches with preaching that have no minister.

Ministering brethren who can devote a portion of their time in serving churches out side of their own charge, can write to us what they are able to do; and churches that are without speakers can furnish us the particulars regarding their location and desires. By so doing, we will be enabled to systemize, in a measure, a portion of the field work, and provide services for many churches that they have not hitherto enjoyed.

Gen. Grant, the Great Smoker.

General Grant's illness has been brought about by his smoking habit. The doctors have forbade the use of tobacco to him entirely, and are laboring to get the nicotine poison out of his system. If he should die a victim of this pernicious habit the question may well be raised how many others in this nation will die of the habit, incurred by the example of General Grant, the great smoker. If men who drink whisky, use tobacco and follow other evil practices, were the only victims to their habits, the evil would not be so great; but it is the evil influence of their example that calls so loudly for reproof. The little boy wants to be a man. He sees that men smoke and chew tobacco; and this is the way they reason: Men smoke. Great men smoke; Gen. Grant smokes; the President smokes. Good men smoke: Deacon — smokes, the preacher smokes and chews, and it must be a great and good thing to smoke and chew. In vain under these circumstances will the good parent tell the child that it is wrong to use tobacco. And it is quite embarrassing, too, for a parent to condemn a habit in a child that is practiced by one to whom the parent delights

to point as an exemplary man. Let General Grant's suffering from tobacco poisoning be used as a warning, to be made as far reaching as his influence for evil has been.

Our readers will find in this issue a well written article from Bro. Tombaugh, which is a fair illustration of the men and measures under which our brethren have suffered in many places. It takes much grace to be able to bear such actions, but it will make us all the better Christians. If the Brethren at Odell can no longer thank God that they are unhindered in their worship, they have reason at least to be thankful that the Spirit of persecution which assails them is not combined with temporal power. Every thing that is, is for the best, and happy is the man who can see the providences of God manifest in even seeming adversities. Unreasonable and wicked men may even be necessary evils and blessings in disguise.

Thursday, the 29th of this month, is the day set apart for prayer for the colleges. We hope Ashland College will be especially remembered by our brethren.

It is quite probable that the historical Waldensian Church will unite with the Free Christian Church in Italy.

Mormonism is actively preached in the South. There are about twenty-five permanent elders in Tennessee, and about as many in North Carolina, and some in South Carolina. In the mountain districts among the poor whites, many converts are reported. They have also been successful in the northwestern territories and frontier states. The curse of Mormonism, owing chiefly to its perfect organization and systematic work, is spreading at a fearful rate. Mormons are as wise as serpents, if they are not as harmless as doves.

The Christian Publishing House, at Dayton, Ohio, has its hard road to travel also, and is appealing for help to lift a debt that is on the institution. It does seem that it is through much tribulation that Christian works are carried forward.

A party of Methodists, under Bishop William Taylor, numbering 50 men, women and children, started last Thursday for its chosen field of work in Central Africa. They undertake a journey which the greatest explorers would not undertake without a vivid sense of its difficulties and perils. They expect, after a journey of five weeks by public and private conveyance, to penetrate the wilds of Africa on foot, a distance of five hundred miles. Think of women and children undertaking such a journey through a country infested by wild beasts, poisonous reptiles and insects, and no less dangerous wild men, and then contemplate whether we are doing all we might do to convert the heathen in our own country. Similar sacrifices to what this party must undergo, would work wonders in the home missionary field of our own churches.

The apostolic letter which the Plenary Council, a late Roman Catholic gathering at Baltimore, sent to the bishops and archbishops

of North Germany, has been suppressed. The feeling against the Roman church is much stronger in Protestant Europe than it is in America.

Joseph Cook will deliver eight Monday lectures in Boston this winter, with preludes, commencing Feb. 2nd.

Rev. Dr. John Hall, in a sermon in New York, lately, on the Christian Sabbath, declared that in Boston, education, culture and civilization have proved a failure to lessen crime. Boston is noted for its education and culture, but it is equally noted for its infidelity to the inspiration of the Bible. Now the fact, as Dr. Hall states it, that crime has increased in Boston, notwithstanding her education and culture, simply argues what Christians so persistently insist upon, that education and culture alone will not prevent crime. These with the religion of the Bible are needed to bring about the highest stage of civilization. The heart must be cultivated as well as the mind, the spiritual as well as the mental, in order to bring man to his full stature of manhood. What Boston most needs is the teaching of the Bible. Without it there can be no true culture, complete education, and higher civilization. A civilization that does not diminish crime as well as cultivate the intellect rests upon a sandy foundation, and like the civilization of ancient Greece and Rome, must sooner or later sink in ruins.

There is a beautiful side to the Arab superstition, which provides that as soon as a child is born, the call to prayer should be sounded in his right ear. Even the Arab might read some Christians a good practical lesson. There are families of professing Christians where the call to prayer is never sounded in the ears of the children, and where those who should be trained for the Lord's service are suffered to grow up in the service of the world, the flesh and the Devil.

A writer in the *Religious Telescope*, on the tobacco habit takes the position that the older ministers may be excused, but of the young men it says that, if they are sufficiently intelligent and well-informed to preach the Gospel, they cannot be ignorant of the filthiness, the expensiveness and the injuriousness of the tobacco habit. And surely the young man knowing these things and who has not grace enough, and grit enough, to break away from the habit, has not the grace and intelligence to preach the Gospel. To which we say, amen.

It is vain to expect to do any real work of reform without making enemies. You may start out with the firmest intention to attack only the wrong, and not those who are involved in the wrong, but the moment you smite the idol, that moment the priests cry out with pain. Abuses are only maintained because it is to some one's interest to maintain them, therefore it is impossible to attack a wrong without attacking the interests of those who are concerned in the maintenance of the wrong.

A book is a living voice. It is a spirit walking on the face of the earth. It continues to be the living thought of a person separated from us by space and time. Men pass away; monuments crumble into dust—what remains and survives is human thought.